

New survey looks at caring for families of dementia patients

April 23 2014, by Sandra Hutchinson



New QUT study investigates the factors that can make the transition of placing a family member into residential care easier.

Placing a family member with dementia in residential care is a difficult decision in a carer's life, which is why a new QUT study is looking to uncover what factors can make the transition easier.

Senior research fellow Elaine Fielding, from QUT's School of Nursing, said for many carers making the call to put a loved one into a residential facility took courage, but it was the transition period that was often the "most stressful" in a carer's life.

"The transition can involve a waiting period, followed by the actual move and then the period of adjustment for both the person with dementia and the carer," she said.

"We know that carers feel guilty, uncertain, stressed and a sense of loss, intermixed with relief and release, when a family member is placed in care.

"But there are also factors that occur during the transition period that can make the adjustment easier or more difficult."

Dr Fielding said with more than 332,000 Australians living with dementia and this number expected to increase by a third within 10 years, the number of carers of people with dementia was increasing rapidly.

"Dementia is the single greatest cause of disability in older Australians over the age 65 and each week there are more than 1700 new cases in Australia, making caring for carers an important public health issue," she said.

"We want to know whether there are some types of carers who are more likely to experience a particularly stressful transition, as well as what types of formal and informal support carers have to help them through the transition.

"For example studies have revealed that the carer's needs during the transition are not always acknowledged by [residential care](#) staff and

factors such lack of communication and feeling alone during the process, can be a barrier to successful transitions.

"Where carers have reported positive transitions the process has included the carer receiving communication, support and having trust in the care being provided."

Dr Fielding said to better understand what impacts the transition has on a carer, QUT was calling for participants to take part in a new survey.

"We are looking for carers with relatives with dementia, who have recently been admitted into care, or are on the waiting list for admission," she said.

"Results from this study will be used to identify practices and supports that could improve that transition for people with [dementia](#) and their carers."

More information: The survey being conducted in conjunction with the Dementia Collaborative Research Centre: Carers and Consumers, is available online: survey.qut.edu.au/f/179722/4db8/

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